A DISSERTATION ON THE CAUSES OF THE DIFFICULTIES,

Which occur, in learning the ENGLISH TONGUE.

With a SCHEME for publiſhing

An ENGLISH GRAMMAR AND DICTIONARY,

Upon a PLAN entirely New.

The Object of which ſhall be, to facilitate the Attainment of the ENGLISH TONGUE, and eſtabliſh a *Perpetual Standard* of PRONUNCIATION.

Addreſſed to a certain NOBLE LORD.

By THOMAS SHERIDAN, A. M.

LONDON,

Printed for R. and J. DODSLEY, in *Pall-Mall*; Mr. DAVIES, in *Ruſſel Street*, *Covent-Garden*; and Mr. HENDERSON, at the *Royal-Exchange*. MDCCLXII.

47.
3 13.
758.

ERRATUM.

P. 34. L. 15. for *resumed*, read *rescued*.

BRITISH MUSEUM

TO

A certain Noble Lord.

My Lord,

I HAVE particular reaſons for chuſing to addreſs you in this manner, without proclaiming your Stile and Title to the world. The way was open to me, by the ſollicitation of friends, who have no ſmall ſhare of your Lordſhip's eſteem and confidence, to have obtained your permiſſion of addreſſing you in the uſual form. But, my Lord, I would not chuſe on this occaſion, to be conſidered in the light of an Author; of one who makes books for hire, and counts upon the Dedication-purſe as part of his wages. I would rather wiſh to be conſidered as a Man, who after much thought, application, and labour, has formed a plan, the execution of which may contribute highly to the benefit of theſe Realms. I have pitched upon your Lordſhip, in my own mind, as the propereſt Perſonage to promote ſuch an undertaking, becauſe you have it moſt in your power; and I am informed by thoſe who are beſt acquainted with your Lordſhip, that no one is more likely to have it in his inclination.

But as it is of great moment, that He who takes the lead in promoting a deſign of this nature, ſhould have the cauſe at heart, I have for this reaſon alſo, declined any application to your Lordſhip, in the uſual way. The undertaking is an arduous one: It will require zeal in the Patron; and cannot be effectually promoted, or carried into execution, by any luke-warm encouragement, which is the uſual effect of the common methods of ſollicitation. In this way of laying it before your Lordſhip, it will be ſoon known whether you will voluntarily enter upon the office, and in that caſe only, ſhould I hope for ſucceſs to the deſign, from your Lordſhip's patronage.

To ſhew the benefits that would accrue to the Public from the execution of the propoſed plan, there needs only to lay the following Queries before the world; and the anſwers to them from all Men of underſtanding, will place that article in a clear light.

Whether it would not contribute much to promote the cauſe of Religion, if the Service of the Church were always performed with propriety, and Sermons delivered with due force?

Whether it would not be of ſervice to the State, if all our Senators, who had from nature the abilities, ſhould alſo be furniſhed from art and practice, with the habitual power of delivering their ſentiments readily, in a correct, perſpicuous,

perſpicuous, and forcible manner? And whether this would not be equally uſeful to the Gentlemen of the Bar?

Whether it would not contribute much to the eaſe and pleaſure of ſociety, and improvement of politeneſs, if all gentlemen in public meetings, or private company, ſhould be able to expreſs their thoughts clearly, and with an utterance ſo regulated, as not to give pain to the underſtanding, or offence to the ears of their auditors?

Whether the firſt ſtep neceſſary to the accompliſhment of theſe points, be not the opening a method, whereby all Children of theſe realms, whether male or female, may be inſtructed from the firſt rudiments, in a grammatical knowlege of the Engliſh tongue, and the art of reading and ſpeaking with propriety and grace; in the ſame regular way, as other languages, and other arts, of infinitely leſs conſequence to them, are now taught?

Whether it would not greatly contribute to put an end to the odious diſtinction kept up between ſubjects of the ſame King, if a way were opened, by which the attainment of the Engliſh tongue in it's purity, both in point of phraſeology and pronunciation, might be rendered eaſy to all inhabitants of his Majeſty's dominions, whether of South or North Brittain; of Ireland, or the Colonies?

Whether it would not redound much to the honour of this nation, if the attainment of our tongue were rendered eaſy to Foreigners, ſo as to enable them to read our excellent Authors in the original?

Whether many important advantages would not accrue both to the preſent age, and to poſterity, if the Engliſh language were aſcertained, and reduced to a fixed and permanent ſtandard?

Theſe are Queſtions which can have but one anſwer from all men of ſenſe. Some of our greateſt Writers have ſhewn the neceſſity of accompliſhing theſe points; but as none of them have pointed out the means by which it might be done, the deſign is thought to be impracticable.

Swift indeed, in a letter to Lord Oxford, propoſes that a ſociety ſhould be eſtabliſhed, to conſider of ways and means for bringing about ſome of theſe purpoſes; but I have in * another place ſhewn, that little was to be expected, from the labours of ſuch a ſociety, even had the propoſal taken place.

But, my Lord, I do not approach you with ſo vague and diſcouraging a propoſal. I have not ventured to lay any before you, 'till I had well conſidered the means, by

* Britiſh Education, Book II. Chap. 10.

which all theſe points may be accompliſhed: Means, which if properly applied, cannot fail of attaining their ends, in a much ſhorter ſpace of time, than can eaſily be imagined. I am the more emboldened to make this aſſertion, becauſe the whole plan has undergone the examination of ſome of the ableſt heads in theſe realms, who all agree in it's practicability, according to the method propoſed.

The firſt neceſſary ſtep towards it, will be the publication of ſuch a Grammar, and Dictionary, as is here propoſed. This muſt be the foundation of the whole, and that once well laid, the Superſtructure, ſtupendous as the fabric may ſeem in idea, might ſoon be finiſhed. If your Lordſhip ſhould entertain any doubt of this, upon being honoured with your commands, I ſhall lay the model before you, and ſhew alſo that there will be no deficiency of materials, when once the work ſhall be ſet about.

I would not wiſh to be conſidered by your Lordſhip in the light of a perſon who is ſolliciting a favour, and endeavouring to compaſs a point that may turn out to his own private benefit, under the ſpecious appearance of public good. No, my Lord, I am ſolliciting no favour for myſelf, and my motives in making this propoſal are ſo far from being ſelfiſh, that I am convinced I am acting againſt my intereſt; I am acting too againſt the opinion

and advice of moſt of my friends, who conſider it in the ſame light. There are other ways open to me of raiſing a larger fortune to my family, than I could reaſonably expect in this, and with infinitely leſs labour to myſelf. And I have given the preference to this, merely from a conviction that I ſhall have lived a much more uſeful member of ſociety, in the one way, than in the other.

But yet I do not carry my notions to ſuch a romantic height, as to be inſenſible to the intereſts of my family, the calls of duty, and the ties of nature. I would not enter into the undertaking, without a moral certainty, that my income ſhould not greatly fall ſhort of what I might reaſonably expect to make by purſuing another courſe. The extraordinary labour that will attend it (and very laborious indeed will the execution of it be) I am willing to ſubmit to, without any other reward in view, than the inward ſatisfaction ariſing from the accompliſhment of ſo uſeful a Deſign.

On the other hand, it appears to me that your Lordſhip is much more nearly intereſted in the event of this undertaking. Bleſt as you are in the poſſeſſion of the beſt gifts of fortune, a noble birth, an exalted ſtation, and ample poſſeſſions, from what ſources can a mind ſuch as your's, derive addition to it's happineſs, ſo great, as from the diſcharge of your duty to your King and Country? Whence

can ſuch funds of inward Satisfaction ariſe, as from your uſing your beſt endeavours to contribute to the glory of your Royal Maſter's reign, and to deſerve the praiſes and good will of all your fellow-ſubjects. If your Lordſhip will attentively weigh the conſequenees of carrying ſuch a plan into execution, you will find, that all theſe deſireable ends are more likely to be obtained in a higher degree this way, than perhaps in any other. What can be more worthy of the attention of an Engliſh King, than the Engliſh Language? Of a King who glories in the name of Briton, than the ſpreading that language in it's purity, thro'out his Britiſh Dominions? What can add more luſtre to his reign, than to have it on record, that it was in that reign, ſo uſeful an inſtitution firſt took place? How will it ſtand diſtinguiſhed from thoſe of his Predeceſſors, by whom, unhappily for theſe Kingdoms, ſo material an article was wholly overlooked! The people of theſe realms are highly indebted to your Lordſhip, for the ſhare you are well known to have had, in forming a King, fit to govern a free Nation. A King, who had he no claim to the Crown, from right of inheritance, would have been entitled to it, if elective, from merit. Nothing could now give you a juſter claim to the thanks of your Royal Maſter, than the purſuing the beſt means of forming the riſing generation in ſuch a way, as to make them fit ſubjects for ſuch a Monarch; fit inſtruments to carry all his wiſe and gracious purpoſes, for the good of theſe realms,

into

into execution. And with regard to your Fellow-ſubjects, all Parents muſt have the ſtrongeſt ſenſe of gratitude to a man, who has put it in their power to have their children trained in ſuch a way, as to make them wiſer, and better men, than their fathers: The riſing generation muſt look on you as a ſecond father; and poſterity will adore your name.

I know I ſhall be looked upon as very antiquated, and unfaſhionable in my notions, in offering any argument on the laſt ſcore, that of *poſterity*. I mean, as a motive to action. The maxim of the Oxford Fellow, that *of taking care of the preſent times, and letting poſterity ſhift for itſelf*, ſeems to have been adopted by all our Engliſh Miniſters. And accordingly, *they have had their reward*; not one of their names having had any reverence paid to it by poſterity. Whilſt that of Richlieu, the French Miniſter, ſtands diſtinguiſhed in the liſt, not only in his own Country, but in the eyes of all Europe, chiefly on the account of inſtitutions eſtabliſhed by him, of the ſame nature here recommended, whereof poſterity was to receive the principal benefit. It is in your power, my Lord, to ſtand ſingle with reſpect to the Liſt of your predeceſſors, and foremoſt with regard to thoſe, who ſhall hereafter have elevation of mind ſufficient to follow your example.

It

It is in your power, my Lord, to furniſh an occaſion for ſome future Hiſtorian, to mark this Æra out, as one of the moſt memorable in the whole Engliſh Hiſtory. You may enable him to ſay, "That it was in the year 1762, that "the firſt eſtabliſhment was made in Great Brittain, for "the ſtudy of the Engliſh language, and the art of ſpeak-"ing. How much are we indebted (proceeds the Hiſto-"rian) to that glorious inſtitution! It is owing to that, "that our Senate has been furniſhed with ſuch numbers of "powerful, and well practiced ſpeakers, as to baniſh the "giant Corruption, with his hundred hands, from this "realm of freedom. It is owing to that, that the ſacred "Miniſtry have been able to diſcharge the moſt important "part of their function; and to impreſs the precepts of "our pure religion, ſo ſtrongly on the hearts of their hear-"ers, as to make them Chriſtians, not in profeſſion only, "but in practice. It is owing to that, that the ambiguity "and obſcurity of our Laws, have given way to clearneſs "and preciſion; and the delay and tedioufneſs of ſuits, "the accounts of which in thoſe days, almoſt exceed be-"lief, were baniſhed, to make way for the preſent eaſy and "ſpeedy method of obtaining juſtice, and ſettling all mat-"ters of property and right. It is to that noble inſtitution "we are indebted, for the refinement and eſtabliſhment "of the Engliſh language, upon ſo ſolid a foundation, "that time ſhall no more prevail againſt it, than it has "againſt the lanuages of old Greece and Rome; and

" Milton and Shakeſpear ſhall not periſh, but with Homer
" and Virgil, in the general diſſolution of the World.

" It is amazing, when we reflect that our anceſtors, ani-
" mated as they were by the moſt enthuſiaſtic ſpirit of liber-
" ty, and ſtruggling for ages, with a courage and reſolu-
" tion not to be matched in ſtory, to eſtabliſh a free con-
" ſtitution both in Church and State, ſhould never before
" that period, have thought of ſecuring thoſe valuable
" bleſſings to their poſterity, by cultivating thoſe powers,
" which alone could ſupport that conſtitution, either in
" Religious, or Civil affairs, the powers of oratory. This
" point may indeed well aſtoniſh any one, who has not
" ſufficiently weighed the force of cuſtom. How much
" therefore are we indebted to that truly patriot ſpirit,
" who at that juncture, broke the fetters of the Tyrant,
" ſnapped aſunder the bonds of prejudice, and gave riſe
" to thoſe inſtitutions, which have ſince flouriſhed in ſo
" eminent a degree, and been productive of all our moſt
*) " valuable enjoyments: Which ſecured thoſe bleſſings to
" us, that have raiſed our Country to a pitch beyond that
" of Athens or Rome, and made it at once the envy, and
" the wonder of the world.

" It is true an attempt of this kind was made in the reign
" of James the firſt, by the Duke of Buckingham; and
" we are informed by Swift, that in the reign of Queen

" Anne,

" Anne, the Earl of Oxford intended to revive it. But " the execution of this excellent design, was reserved to " adorn the opening of the reign of George the third. " The success of it was entirely owing to the zealous en- " deavours of ——

Here, my Lord, is a blank — The name of that minister which shall fill it, will be more memorable in future times than that of Mæcenas; and the name of his Royal Master, superiour to that of Augustus.

I shall add no more, but that all things are ready to carry the design into execution, provided there be sufficient encouragement. Your's be the honour, let the Nation reap the benefit. I am,

My Lord,

Your Lordship's

most obedient,

and devoted

humble Servant,

Thomas Sheridan.

A DISSERTATION, &c.

IT is a truth well known, that when a foreigner arrives in London, and enquires for a maſter to teach him the language of the Country, there is no ſuch perſon to be found; nor is there any method open to him, by which he may be aſſiſted, in attaining a juſt manner of ſpeaking Engliſh.

This is not the caſe in the more Southern Countries of Europe, ſuch as Italy, France, and Spain; where foreigners may be taught to ſpeak the reſpective tongues of thoſe countries, with the utmoſt propriety, by ſkilful maſters, with the aid of proper grammars and dictionaries.

On this account it is, that the Engliſh are ſtill claſſed by the people of thoſe countries, amongſt the more rude, and ſcarcely civilized nations of the North. They affix the term of barbariſm to this country, in the ſame manner as the Greeks did to the reſt of the world; and on the ſame principle, on account of the neglect of regulating and poliſhing our Speech. It was on that account chiefly

that the Greeks looked down upon the reſt of the world with contempt; nor did they make any diſtinction between the Romans their conquerors, and other nations, including them under the common denomination of Barbarians; till the Romans, by a like application to the culture of their language, became their rivals in that article, and have had their names ever ſince joined to them, in contradiſtinction to all other nations of antiquity.

And indeed, a neglect of their ſpeech, is not only a characteriſtical mark of barbariſm in all nations, but the ſure means of continuing them in that ſtate; as on the contrary, the regulation and refinement of language is a neceſſary ſtep towards introducing politeneſs. It is therefore much to be wiſhed, for the honour, as well as intereſt of this country, that an article of ſuch importance, ſhould no longer be ſo ſhamefully neglected.

The great difficulty of the Engliſh tongue lies in the pronunciation; an exactneſs in which, after all the pains they can take, is found to be unattainable, not only by foreigners, but * Provincials. The chief cauſe of this, has been the want of method in teaching it, by a well digeſted ſyſtem of rules. Some of our grammarians indeed, begin their work with a definition, that would lead us to expect a regular treatiſe on this Subject. They ſet out

* By Provincials is here meant all Britiſh Subjects, whether inhabitants of Scotland, Ireland, Wales, the ſeveral counties of England, or the city of London, who ſpeak a corrupt dialect of the Engliſh tongue.

with

with telling us that grammar conſiſts of two parts, Orthoepy, or the juſt manner of pronouncing; and Orthography, or the juſt manner of writing words. So that they define grammar, to be the art of teaching people to ſpeak, and write correctly, according to the cuſtom of thoſe whoſe language we learn. But after they have made this diſtinction, they ſcarce take any farther notice of orthoëpy, and their whole pains are employed about the other article, orthography. They were deterred from that part of the work by the immenſe difficulty of the undertaking; and as there never has been any publick encouragement to ſuch a work, either by ſocieties, or Royal munificence, (means which produced the regulation and refinement of their ſeveral tongues in neighbouring countries,) there has been no one hardy enough to engage in the taſk, upon a precarious proſpect of reward.

This is the taſk on which I am now employed; to reſtore the firſt, and nobleſt part of grammar, to its juſt rank and power; and to reduce the other to its due ſtate of ſubordination: to make the ſpoken language, as it ought to be, the archetype; of which, the written language ſhould be conſidered only as the type.

In order to this, I ſhall firſt trace the difficulties, which lie in the way of ſuch an undertaking, to their ſource; and then, by ſhewing how all obſtacles may be removed, point out an eaſy way, to the accompliſhment of the deſign.

The chief difficulty ariſes, from the little care there has been taken, to preſerve any analogy between the written, and the ſpoken language; the ſpelling, and the pronunciation of words: as alſo a neglect of analogy, in the rules, by which the written language, conſidered by itſelf, without reference to Speech, ought to be governed. That the Engliſh reader may ſee this difficulty in its proper light, I ſhall here preſent him with ſome ſpecimens of the irregularity, and confuſion, every where to be found in the graphic art. Otherwiſe, having by long practice overcome the difficulty, he may not think it ſo great as it is; nor ſee the true reaſon, that a juſt pronunciation of Engliſh, is found ſo impracticable a point to Foreigners and Provincials.

No. 1.

	Firſt	*Second*	*Third*	*Fourth*	*Fifth*
A	hat	hate	hall		
E	bet	there	here	her	
I	fit	bite	field	ſtir	birth
o	not	note	prove	love	
u	cub	buſh	cube	buſy	

No.

No. 2.

Different ſounds marked exactly in the ſame way.

There here | grove prove love
Fourth youth mouth tough | who go
Door noon blood | bear hear head heart

No. 3.

The ſame ſounds marked in different ways.

2d a		3d e	
ai	fail	e	he
ay	day	ee	ſeem
ey	they	ea	veal
eigh	weigh	ie	field
eig	reign	ei	deceive

3d a		2d o	
aw	draw	o	go
au	cauſe	ow	blow
all	fall	ew	ſhew
ald	bald	oe	foe
alk	talk	ou	fourth
oa	broad	oo	door
ough	ought	oa	groan
augh	caught		

3d o		1ſt u	
o	who	u	bud
oo	noon	oo	blood
omb	tomb	ou	tough
ou	youth	o	word
		i	bird
		e	her

3d u	
u	cube
eu	feud
ew	new
ue	clue
iew	view

On looking over the above Scheme, we ſhall perceive in No. 1. that every vowel ſtands as a mark for three, four, or five different ſounds. In No. 2, that two, three, or four different ſounds are marked exactly in the ſame way. In No. 3, that the ſame ſound is marked in four, five, ſix, ſeven, or eight different ways.

So much for the irregularity in the uſe of our vowels; nor ſhall we find the ſtate of our conſonants much better.

C has three ſounds	k	care
	s	ceaſe
	ſh	ſocial
F hat its ſound marked by two different combinations of letters	Ph	Philip
	gh	laugh

G has

G has two ſounds		gold
		gentle
j has the ſame ſound		joy
as that of 2d G		gentle
S has four ſounds	s	yes
	z	roſe
	ſh	paſſion
	zh	oſier
T alſo has four ſounds	t	tell
	s	ſatiety
	ſh	nation
	ch	queſtion
X has three ſounds	gz	example
	ks	vex
	z	Xerxes
Th has two ſounds	dh	then
	th	thin
Ch has three ſounds	k	chorus
	ſh	chaiſe
	ch	charity
Gh has two ſounds	g	ghoſt
	f	laughter
and is often mute as in		daughter

This

This is but a ſmall ſpecimen, of the irregularities to be found in the ſtate of our written language; yet it may ſerve to ſhew, how difficult, nay impoſſible, the attempt muſt be, to acquire a knowledge of the true pronunciation of Engliſh, unleſs the learner be furniſhed with a proper clue, to guide him through this labyrinth.

Words written, may be conſidered two ways; either as types of ſounds, which ſtand for ideas; or, immediate types of ideas, without any reference to ſound. Deaf men can conſider them only in the latter light: To thoſe who have the organs of hearing, they may ſtand in both, or either.

When written words are conſidered only as the types of ſounds, in order to make them correſpond to their archetypes, the four following rules ſhould be ſtrictly obſerved:

1. No character ſhould be ſet down in any word, which is not pronounced.

2. Every diſtinct ſimple ſound, ſhould have a diſtinct character to mark it; for which, it ſhould uniformly ſtand.

3. The ſame character ſhould never be ſet down, as the repreſentative of two different ſounds.

4. All compound ſounds, ſhould be marked only by ſuch characters, as will naturally, and neceſſarily produce thoſe

thoſe ſounds, upon being properly pronounced, in the order in which they are placed.

Theſe rules were ſtrictly obſerved in the juſtly celebrated language of old Greece, and, in a great meaſure alſo, in that of Rome after the refinement of their tongue; inſomuch that the knowledge of their alphabet alone, and of the power of the ſeveral letters, together with the manner of joining them in forming ſyllables and words; enabled every one, without further aid of rules or maſters, to pronounce their words properly in reading, excepting in the article of quantity: And their graphic art wanted nothing of perfection, but ſome marks, to diſtinguiſh the long, from the ſhort ſounds of the vowels. Whereas in the Engliſh all theſe rules are ſo frequently violated, or rather ſo totally diſregarded, that no aſſiſtance can at preſent be derived to pronunciation from reading.

Such indeed is the ſtate of our written language, that the darkeſt hieroglyphicks, or moſt difficult cyphers, which the art of man has hitherto found out, were not better calculated to conceal the ſentiments of thoſe who uſed them, from all who had not the key, than the ſtate of our ſpelling is, to conceal the true pronunciation from all, except a few well educated natives. Nay, our ſpelling is built upon ſo perverſe a principle, that it is laid down as a maxim, by one who took great pains to examine its ſtate, that all words which can be ſounded different ways, muſt be written according to the hardeſt, harſheſt, longeſt, and

moſt unuſual ſound. As this erroneous and perplexed ſtate of our orthography is the true reaſon that our language is ſo little ſought after abroad, or ſtudied at home; that its true pronunciation is ſo impracticable to foreigners, and ſo ſeldom to be met with in natives; that it is thought to have ſuch barbariſm in ſound by thoſe of other countries, who judge of the ſtate of its ſound from the manner of ſpelling words in books; and that its true powers and beauty are ſo little known by thoſe whoſe mother tongue it is, but who have never turned their thoughts to examine it in its living ſtate, paſſing judgment on it likewiſe from its written ſtate, as foreigners do: As all theſe evils ariſe chiefly from that cauſe, there cannot be a matter of more importance in the ſubject, which I have undertaken, than to lay open the ſource of this irregularity and confuſion.

The chief cauſe of the irregular ſtate of our ſpelling, will at once appear, when we reflect that we have adopted the Roman alphabet to be the repreſentative of our ſounds. Now if we have a greater number of ſimple ſounds in our tongue, than there are letters in that alphabet, it muſt neceſſarily follow that the ſurplus number of ſimple ſounds can have no peculiar characters to repreſent them in writing; and conſequently, that either they muſt be marked by ſingle characters, which ſtand alſo for other ſounds; or by combinations of characters, which, ſeparately taken, ſtand for other ſimple ſounds.

This

This was not the caſe of the Greeks and Romans, who had each an alphabet of their own, peculiarly adapted to their ſeveral tongues; in which every ſimple ſound had its diſtinct mark, by which it was uniformly and invariably repreſented; nor did the ſame character ever ſtand for two different ſounds, nor was any ſimple ſound ever marked by more than one character, except to diſtinguiſh quantity, as in the eta and omega of the Greeks: As the Romans had a greater number of ſounds in their tongue, they had alſo a greater number of letters.

Such was the caſe of the old Saxons alſo, and the ſeveral nations of Europe, before the revival of ancient literature; each having an alphabet to their reſpective tongues, though not framed or uſed by thoſe barbarians, with that exactneſs and accuracy which were ſo conſpicuous in thoſe enlightened and civilized countries. Upon the revival of learning the Latin tongue was held in ſuch univerſal admiration, and came into ſuch general uſe, that by common conſent the Roman alphabet, which became known to all the learned by this means, was adopted to be the common repreſentative of all the different tongues of the ſeveral nations of Europe, in which ancient literature was eſtabliſhed. This could not happen without prejudice to analogy between ſpeech and writing in all thoſe countries; and therefore it required great pains in their ſeveral grammarians, and a multitude of rules, to adjuſt the difference between them; which however has been tolerably well ac-

compliſhed by thoſe nations, who have wiſely taken the pains to eſtabliſh ſuch a regulation, and by that means rendered the knowledge of their ſeveral tongues, and the ſpeakking them with propriety, eaſy to learners. But the Engliſh, upon this occaſion, were greater ſufferers than any other people; for having a greater number of ſimple ſounds in their tongue than any of the reſt, there was a proportional deficiency of letters to be their ſymbols; and unleſs they had proceeded by certain and well grounded rules, in marking thoſe ſupernumerary ſounds, by ſteady combinations of letters, there was the greateſt danger that the utmoſt confuſion would enſue. But this was done amongſt us, with ſo little judgment or regard to order, that chance and caprice only ſeemed to bear ſway, in modeling the ſpelling by the new alphabet. All the rules of orthography, by which the wiſe nation, from whom we borrowed the letters, regulated theirs, were broken thro' and wholly diſregarded. The diſorder in a ſhort time ſo infected the whole maſs of our language, that it was judged to be incurable; and all attempts towards a remedy, proved ſo ineffectual, as to confirm men in that opinion, and turn their thoughts from ſo vain a purſuit. When this point was given up, the ſpirit of pedantry, which then univerſally prevailed, ſuggeſted a new uſe of written language, unknown to the Greeks and Romans, by which theſe pedants, as far as lay in their power, endeavoured to make a change in its very nature and end, and conſequently in the rules by which it was to be governed. They contended, that the principal object in ſpelling, ought not

to

to be to guide learners to the true pronunciation of words, but to aſſiſt the underſtanding in finding out their meaning; by preſerving ſuch letters, and placing them in ſuch order as might beſt point out their derivation, and recal to mind the words in the original languages (but more particularly the Latin) from which they were borrowed and adopted by us.

Thus multitudes of letters were preſerved in writing, that had no ſound in uttering the words in which they were to be ſeen; and the uſe of vowels and diphthongs, together with their ſeveral powers, were all confounded; as it was determined that ſuch as were in the original ſhould maintain their poſt in writing, though in pronunciation, the ſounds of different vowels and diphthongs ſhould be heard. Thus were theſe two kinds of language, the ſpoken and the written, which in all reaſon ſhould have been as inſeparable as body and ſhadow, ſtill farther diſunited by the joint endeavours of pedantry and barbariſm, contrary to the practice of the Greeks and Romans. As the pedants had no power over the pronunciation of our language, all words adopted into our tongue, were made in time to conform to the mode of our ſpeech, according to the rules of our own analogy in pronouncing, not that of the nations from which they were derived; they were fitted to the Engliſh organs, admitted as denizens, and made free of the language. But the pedants, who had great power over the written language, reſolved that theſe words ſhould always retain the marks of their foreign

foreign extraction in writing, and wear a perpetual badge of diſtinction from natives; and the ſpecious reaſon they have aſſigned for this proceeding is, that written language is in this way better calculated to aſſiſt the underſtanding, which is a more important end, than aſſiſting pronunciation.

On the other hand, it was warmly contended that words ought to be ſpelt as they are pronounced; and no doubt this opinion might have been ſupported by ſuch unanſwerable reaſons, that notwithſtanding the power of cuſtom, the force of faſhion, and the efforts of pedantry againſt it, it muſt in time have made way, and our ſpelling would have been gradually reformed and moulded by that rule, were there not an unſeen obſtacle in the way ariſing from a defective alphabet. The thing was indeed impracticable, according to the method they purſued, but not perceived to be ſo, for the cauſe was unknown; which gave riſe to many ſucceſſive fruitleſs efforts. The ſticklers for derivation, indulged a literary vanity; and the partiſans of pronunciation, knew they had common ſenſe on their ſide, in the point which they had in view, but had not gone deep enough into the ſubject to ſee the chief difficulty in their way in the purſuit of it. Between theſe there was a ſort of moderating party, who on many occaſions, reſerved ſome letters as marks of derivation, and added others as marks of pronunciation. As in the word *honour* derived from *honor* in the Latin, and ſounded by us as if it were ſpelt *onnur*, they preſerved the *h* and the *o* to ſhew its derivation, and added the *u* to mark the ſound. The ſame

is

is to be obſerved of the *o* in *favour*, *labour*, and many others. But of late pedantry has taken up arms againſt the *u*, baniſhed it as an intruder, and introduced the ſheer Latin words into Engliſh. Many ſucceſſive, and alternate innovations, on theſe ſeveral principles, have kept our written language in a continual ſtate of fluctuation; and theſe, together with a defective alphabet, the regulation of which was originally left to caprice and faſhion, have made our written language appear ſo completely a chaos, that it has been hitherto thought impoſſible, to find either rule or order in it; and the knowledge of it at preſent is hardly to be obtained by the utmoſt efforts of induſtry.

Whilſt the diſpute between the oppoſite parties remains unſettled, it is impoſſible that the part of the confuſion, which is occaſioned by it, can be removed; and if, upon adjuſting the difference between them, the remedy would offer itſelf, and were within reach, nothing would be ſo eaſy as to ſhew that all the argnments advanced by the advocates for derivation, however ſpecious at firſt view, are, in reality, to the laſt degree weak and frivolous; and have taken their riſe wholly from a partial and miſtaken view of the end and uſe of written language. And on the other hand, it might be demonſtrated, by more cogent arguments than any hitherto uſed, that the advocates for ſpelling according to pronunciation, are engaged in a juſt cauſe; which they know not how to defend, from want of a full comprehenſion of the ſubject; and that they have failed of their end, by endeavouring to uſe means, which are utterly

inadequate

inadequate to the attainment of it. But as the ſettling this point would only clear the way for alleviating a ſmall part of the diſeaſe, whoſe ſource lies deeper, in the very vitals, in the alphabet itſelf; I ſhall not waſte my time in examining the branching ſtreams, but go at once to the fountain head.

It is well known that the written language, in its preſent ſtate, is by no means a guide to a right pronunciation of the Engliſh tongue. To the truth of this, not only all foreigners, but the Iriſh, the Scotch, the Welſh, the inhabitants of the ſeveral counties of England, nay of the very metropolis itſelf, can bear teſtimony. And even amongſt the few who are maſters of the true pronunciation, it might be proved that they are in no ſhape indebted for it to books. Is there a man deficient in this reſpect, either foreigner, who is deſirous of ſpeaking it, or native, who uſes it as his mother tongue, in the corrupt ſtate, which cuſtom has eſtabliſhed, in the place of his birth or education, that does not wiſh the means of acquiring the polite and moſt approved pronunciation were in his power? To ſatisfy the deſire and ſupply the wants of all ſuch is the intention of the plan which I have to offer on this head. For them, and for them only, is it calculated; nor ought the opinion of ſuch, as find no want of this kind, be aſked, or their ſuffrages taken. They are indeed but too ready to pronounce that they ſee no occaſion for any thing of this kind, becauſe they expect no benefit to themſelves to be derived from it; but this ſelfiſh judgment of a few, ought not to have any weight

weight againſt the intereſt of Foreigners in general, and ninety nine in a hundred of his Majeſty's Subjects; let me add alſo, againſt the intereſts of the Engliſh language itſelf. All ſuch as think they can not be benefited by it, will ſhew themſelves candid, by being neutral; or generous, by promoting the plan, if it meets with their approbation. The plan itſelf is well worthy the attention of thoſe, who do not hope benefit from it, on account of the end propoſed by it; which is no leſs, than laying down a method, by which Foreigners, as well as natives, may acquire the true pronunciation of Engliſh, by the aſſiſtance of books chiefly; in ſpite of the ſuppoſed impracticability of ſuch a deſign.

The pronunciation of a language may be acquired either from converſation or books. The latter method, for the reaſons already aſſigned, is wholly given up in our tongue; and the pronunciation of all natives of theſe Countries, is entirely formed, from the cuſtom which prevails in the places of their reſpective birth and education. The dialects are different, not only in the ſeveral Countries, but Counties of the ſame Country. The ſtandard of pronunciation is affixed to the cuſtom which prevails amongſt people of education at Court, ſo that none but ſuch as are born and bred up amongſt them, or have conſtant opportunities of converſing with them, and that too in early years, before the pliant organs have taken their bent, can be ſaid to be maſters of it: And theſe are but a few com-

pared to the millions who ſpeak the ſame tongue, and cannot have ſuch opportunity. Now if a method of acquiring a juſt pronunciation by books, as well as converſation, were eſtabliſhed, the acquiſition would not be circumſcribed within ſuch narrow bounds, but would lie open to all Britiſh Subjects wherever born, as well as to all foreigners, with but little aid from Maſters. This would be making a noble uſe of the invention of printing, which might have given us ſuch an advantage over the Ancients in this reſpect, as well as many others; but which, thro' the abuſe of it, it is to be feared has done more harm than good. If the ſtandard of pronunciation had been affixed to the written language, it is evident how permanent it might have been rendered by fixed marks; and how univerſally it might have been ſpread by means of the preſs, and the cheapneſs of books, which has made the art of reading (confined to the opulent chiefly amongſt the ancients) familiar to the loweſt people. Let us therefore examine, in the firſt place, whether it was practicable to have made the written language a guide to juſt pronunciation, ſuppoſing that to have been the object on the firſt regulation and attempts to ſettle it; and afterwards, from a view of its deficiences, and inability to anſwer that end, in its preſent ſtate, whether ſome method may not be found out to ſupply thoſe defects, and give it ſtill power to aſcertain the pronunciation, and to ſerve as a ſure guide to learners.

However

However evident it may be to a diligent enquirer, that written language might be made a perfect ſtandard of pronunciation, or that words might be ſo ſpelt upon paper, as that every one acquainted with the true power of the letters, and the rules of ſpelling, ſhould, upon the view, be able to ſound them properly; yet will it be far from appearing in this light, to ſuch as have never conſidered the written language, farther than in its preſent defective and irregular ſtate. In order to ſhew the practicability of the thing, in the eaſieſt and cleareſt manner to all apprehenſions, I ſhall beg of thoſe who have any doubt about it, to compare the ſtate of the graphic art, which repreſents articulate ſounds, with that of her ſiſter art, which repreſents thoſe of the inarticulate kind; I mean, the art of writing words, with that of writing muſical notes. In the latter art, every ſound, which can poſſibly be produced in harmonious compoſitions, has its peculiar and diſtinct character in writing; and all combinations of ſuch ſounds, are ſo exactly pointed out by ſettled, ſteady, viſible marks, both with regard to tone and time, that whoever has once made himſelf maſter of their powers, can never be miſtaken in reading Muſic. Hence it is that the written language of Muſic is become univerſal, and is to be learned with equal eaſe and certainty by the Natives of all Countries. And has not this given a vaſt ſuperiority to the muſical graphic art, over the rhetorical? Ought this to be the caſe? Are inarticu-

late ſounds of more conſequence to Mankind than the articulate? Is muſic ſuperiour in utility to poetry or oratory; let me add even in charms? Is the inſtrument by which one of the ſenſes only is gratified, and a tranſient pleaſure obtained, of more value than one, whereby the ſame ſenſe may be equally gratified, and at the ſame time knowledge acquired, the underſtanding enlarged, and the power encreaſed of communicating all the nobleſt affections and emotions from ſoul to ſoul? If not, why ſuch care, ſuch accuracy in the one; why ſuch neglect, ſuch confuſion in the other? The diſcuſſion of theſe queſtions will naturally lead us to the very bottom of the ſubject; and by laying open the cauſes of the different procedure in theſe two arts, ſhew what have been the obſtacles in the way, which have prevented the one from arriving at the ſame perfection as the other, and diſcloſe the means of ſtill accompliſhing ſo deſireable a point.

Upon enquiring into the reaſon of the different ſtates of the two arts, the firſt obſervation that occurs is, that the chief and ultimate end of Muſic is to gratify the ear, by pleaſing proportions of ſounds; but the chief and ultimate end of ſpeech, is to inform the underſtanding, and the pleaſure it may give the ear, is but a ſecondary one. Conſequently it was a more neceſſary object in the former, to be attentive to exactneſs in marking ſounds, than in the latter art. But there aroſe a ſtill greater neceſſity for the utmoſt nicety and accuracy in the graphic art of muſic, from

another

another eſſential difference between Muſic and Speech; between the manner of conveying articulate, and inarticulate ſounds to the ear. A very little progreſs in the muſical art, would ſoon convince the profeſſors, that much greater delight would ariſe from a concert of various inſtruments, than from any performance on a ſingle one; and as the harmony muſt ariſe from their exact correſpondence to each other both in time and tune, it was impoſſible to accompliſh this, but by the greateſt accuracy in the notes and marks, which diſtinguiſhed the ſeveral ſounds and times. From the moment therefore that they ſet about the work, they muſt have had a perpetual ſpur to their induſtry, till it was accompliſhed, as nothing ſhort of perfection could anſwer the end propoſed; for the leaſt defect in either of thoſe articles, muſt be conſtantly productive of diſcord, inſtead of harmony. Thus we may conſider a band of Muſic playing in concert, as a number of perſons reading together exactly in the ſame manner, both in tone and time. But this is not the caſe with regard to the readers of articulate ſounds, or words; which can be read aloud only by one perſon at a time, ſo as to be underſtood by the hearers. And as the being underſtood is the chief object of the reader of words, and the delight reſulting from a juſt and graceful pronunciation, only a ſecondary one, the former may in a great meaſure be accompliſhed without the latter; and conſequenly, there is not the ſame neceſſity, that the reader of words, ſhould be as complete a maſter of the tones and proportions

tions of his marks, as the reader of muſic of his notes; whoſe chief end is to delight, and who can not accompliſh that end, any other way, but by the moſt accurate knowledge of the ſeveral powers of thoſe notes.

From this view of the different ends propoſed in theſe two arts, we may ſee the reaſon of the different means uſed to attain thoſe ends. To repreſent ſounds was the ultimate object of the muſical graphic art; to repreſent ideas was the principal one of the rhetorical; and as this might be done without any reference to ſound at all, the repreſentation of ſounds was not an eſſential, but only a ſecondary object. The ſtate of written language therefore has been very different in different nations of the world, according to the object which they had in view in framing it; which may be reduced to three kinds. The firſt, That, which had ideas for its immediate object, without reference to ſounds. The ſecond, That, which had ſounds for its immediate object, and whoſe chief end was to give an exact repreſentation of them, as in the muſical art. The third, That which profeſſed to have ſounds for its object, but was little ſollicitous about accuracy in marking them.

The firſt of theſe has been called the language of hierogliphics, and there is reaſon to believe both from hiſtory and the nature of things, that this was the firſt kind of written language, or method of communicating ideas

ideas by viſible marks. This art was known to the Ægyptians previous to the invention of letters; and we find it alſo in uſe amongſt the Mexicans, when firſt ſubdued by the Spaniards. It is natural indeed to ſuppoſe that the firſt attempts to communicate ideas through the eye, would be by drawing the ſimilitude of ſuch things as are the objects of that ſenſe; to delineate for inſtance the figure of a man, a tree, or a horſe, to ſtand as marks of our ideas of theſe ſeveral objects. And this written language, ſo far as it could go, was certainly the moſt perfect, and the types in it were moſt correſpondent to their archetypes. But as the method was exceedingly ſlow and laborious, and could exhibit only a ſmall part of what paſſed in the mind, being confined to objects of one ſenſe only, the induſtry of man was ſet to work to find out a more eaſy, expeditious, and comprehenſive method of communication in writing; and this ended in the invention of letters; which by being made the ſymbols of articulate ſounds, became capable of conveying knowledge in as extenſive a manner as ſpeech, and with equal eaſe and celerity.

The utility of this diſcovery was too apparent, not to be immediately embraced in all countries where it was made known. But very different was the uſe made of it in different countries, in proportion to the wiſdom and good order which prevailed in the different ſtates. The Greeks acknowledged that they were indebted to Barbarians for

the

the invention of letters, but boaſt that they alone knew how to make a right uſe of the invention. They were indeed the firſt people in the world, who made it one of their chief objects, to regulate and refine their ſpeech, and employed themſelves in the taſk with unwearied induſtry from generation to generation, till they carried it nearly to perfection. They had too much penetration not to ſee of what uſe a due attention to the ſtate of writing might be, towards fixing and giving permanence to that perfection, which they had purchaſed with ſuch labour; and had too much public ſpirit, and ardour for the glory of their Country, not to endeavour to give immortality to the glorious works of their writers. The event has been anſwerable to their pains and expectations; their language will remain, and be held in admiration to the end of time.

They were at that juncture the only people who endeavoured to model the graphic art according to its true uſe and end, according to the ſecond kind which I have mentioned in my diviſion, and which had ſounds for its immediate object; and their chief view in the regulation of it was to give an exact repreſentation of thoſe ſounds. In this they were afterwards imitated by the Romans. Whilſt the Eaſtern Countries, amongſt whom letters were invented and in uſe, long before they were carried into Greece, contented themſelves with the third ſtate of written language, which had the repreſentation of articulate

ſounds

ſounds for its object, but in the execution, was very imperfect and inacurate. There need be no ſtronger proof given, of the very defective ſtate, in which the art of writing always remained amongſt them, than to mention that the vowels were wholly omitted, and had no characters in the alphabet to mark them; and as it muſt be allowed, that the vowels are of all letters the moſt important, both to aſcertain the pronunciation, and meaning of words, it muſt alſo be granted, that this was an eſſential defect in the fundamentals, equally obſtructing both ends of written language, whether conſidered as the repreſentative of ſenſe or ſound, of ideas or words. The effect has been ſuch as might naturally be expected from ſuch a courſe; for the reſult of the enquiries into the ancient languages of the Eaſt, has been only endleſs controverſies, about both the meaning and pronunciation, amongſt thoſe who have given themſelves up to ſtudies of this kind; whilſt in the well regulated Greek and Roman writings, the meaning of the words is as well aſcertained, as that of any living tongue, and ſo might the pronunciation alſo, in a great meaſure, if it were thought an object worthy of ſufficient attention. Though it muſt be allowed, that on account of one ſmall defect in the graphic art, in thoſe countries, there would ſome difficulties occur, in adjuſting exactly the pronunciation, eſpecially as none of their grammars have been handed down to us. As this defect is the only one, which prevented their written language from being in the utmoſt ſtate of perfection, ſo far as relates to

the pronunciation of words, it deſerves to be taken notice of.

It has been already remarked, that the four fundamental rules of orthography, were ſo ſtrictly obſerved by them, that no one acquainted with their alphabet and rules of ſpelling, could make any miſtake in pronouncing, as to ſound. But as in pronouncing their words, it was of importance to obſerve quantity, as well as quality, no doubt they ſhould have had ſome marks, to diſtinguiſh the long, from the ſhort ſounds of their vowels. This was the only ſtumbling block in the way of Foreigners, which prevented their acquiring an accurate pronunciation of thoſe tongues by reading. The Greeks ſaw the defect, and began a reformation, by adding the characters of eta and omega to their alphabet, to diſtinguiſh the long from the ſhort ſounds of epſilon and omicron. Had they done the ſame by the other three vowels, or even without inventing new characters, affixed ſome marks to diſtinguiſh the long from the ſhort ſounds, the quantity of their ſyllables would have been ſettled to perpetuity; without having recourſe to laborious reſearches into proſody, and a multitude of rules to guide us in that article. And what have all theſe rules ended in? Not in fixing the true quantity for the ſpeaker, ſo that it may be diſtinguiſhed in pronunciation, (in which reſpect they are but of little uſe); but for the writer, that he may be enabled to arrange his words in meaſure according to the cuſtom of the ancients.

Whilſt

Whilſt in general the ear acknowledges no difference in time between the long and the ſhort ſounds. But had the other three vowels been diſtinguiſhed in the ſame manner, we ſhould not only have had no occaſion for any rules of proſody whatſoever in Greek, but we ſhould never have failed to diſtinguiſh the long and ſhort quantities to the ear, by the different times taken up in pronouncing them. Of this, there need not be a better proof offered, than what ariſes from matter of fact, in relation to the two vowels ſo diſtinguiſhed; with regard to which, as there was no occaſion for any, ſo are there no rules to be found in proſody; and we never fail to diſtinguiſh their quantity to the ear. The Romans did not follow the example of the Greeks ſo far, as to make any diſtinction between the marks of the different quantities even of thoſe two vowels, and therefore we are ſtill more liable to miſtakes in that reſpect, in pronouncing Latin, than Greek. And as the Roman alphabet has been adopted by all the nations of Europe, the ſame defect, of not marking the different quantities of the vowels, prevails in what are called the modern languages.

Thus we ſee that the art of writing words, was never brought to the degree of perfection of which it was capable, in any age or Country, though the Greeks approached nearly to it. The principal defect lay in the vowels, which were wholly omitted by the Eaſtern nations in general. The Greeks and Romans marked their ſounds with great

accuracy, but not their quantity. Whilſt the Moderns, but particularly the Engliſh, are greatly defective in both articles. To bring the art to perfection, it would be only neceſſary to adhere cloſely to the rules obſerved by the Greeks, ſo far as they went; and to ſupply the ſingle defect in the article of quantity. The pronunciation of any language, built upon this model, might be acquired by reading, with equal certainty, by inhabitants of the different Countries of the Globe, with that of muſic, by aſſiſtance of the notes. Nor is this an ideal plan only, for it has in one inſtance been carried into execution, and by its ſucceſs, has given proof of the practicability, as well as reaſonableneſs of the deſign. According to this plan, have the modern Hebræans framed their written language. They reckon thirteen vowels, to which they have aſſigned thirteen different marks, by which they diſtinguiſh both their quantity and quality. Every other ſound has its diſtinct mark, and they are conſtant in the uſe of them. If there be a redundant, or quieſcent letter, preſented to the eye, through cuſtom or analogy in ſpelling, it has alſo its peculiar mark, to ſhew that it is not to be ſounded. The conſequence of which has been, that the pronunciation of Hebrew in the method here laid down, is rendered ſo eaſy, that any one of moderate capacity, with but little aſſiſtance from a *Maſter*, may make himſelf perfect in it in a few days, ſo as never to be guilty of an error in reading Hebrew with points. Is there any one who does not wiſh that that of Engliſh were as eaſily attainable?

But

But to this it will be immediately objected, that however right the deſign might appear in Theory, it would be impoſſible to carry it into execution. That to follow the example of the latter Hebræans, the whole graphic art muſt be changed; that new characters muſt be introduced into the alphabet, to mark all the differences of the vowels, both in quantity and quality; that there would be no uſe of theſe if they were not transferred into our books, which muſt all be reprinted according to the new alphabet; that people muſt be taught their alphabet anew to enable them to read ſuch reprinted books; that it would be the height of abſurdity to ſuppoſe ſuch meaſures practicable, and therefore that the whole ſcheme, as chimerical, muſt fall to the ground.

Indeed any deſign of that ſort muſt prove to the laſt degree impracticable, and conſequently fail of its end. Nor could a thought of this kind enter into the head of any one, who knows that the whole power of a Roman Emperor, was in vain exerted, to introduce a ſingle letter into ther alphabet, the Æolic digamma; though ſuch a character was confeſſedly wanting. But in the preſent ſcheme it is not propoſed that there ſhould be the leaſt change in our alphabet, or alteration made in the mode of writing or ſpelling Engliſh. The object of it is, to fix ſuch a ſtandard of pronunciation, by means of viſible marks, that it may be in the power of every one, to acquire an accurate man-

ner of uttering every word in the Engliſh tongue, by applying to that ſtandard. In order to this, the author of this ſcheme propoſes to publiſh a Dictionary, in which the true pronunciation, of all the words in our tongue, ſhall be pointed out by viſible and accurate marks. To effect this, one column ſhall exhibit the words in alphabetical order as they are written, or ſpelt; and in another column, oppoſite to each word ſhall be marked its juſt pronunciation. The principle upon which this is performed is the ſimpleſt that can be conceived. Any one of moderate capacity may in an hour's time make himſelf maſter of the marks, and then he can no more miſtake the pronunciation, than they who are acquainted with the notes, can miſtake in reading muſic; or with the points, in reading Hebrew.

To this Dictionary ſhall be prefixed a Rhetorical Grammar, upon the following plan:

1*ſt*, The number of ſimple ſounds in the Engliſh tongue ſhall be aſcertained. Such as have no peculiar letters in our alphabet to repreſent them ſhall be pointed out, and have proper marks aſſigned to them to diſtinguiſh them in writing, and proper names in ſpeaking of them.

2*dly*, All ſuch ſimple ſounds as are peculiar to the Engliſh ſhall be pointed out; and the difference in that reſpect between ours, the French, Italian, Spaniſh, and German, ſeverally ſhewn. The manner in which thoſe ſounds are

formed ſhall be manifeſted; and a method laid down whereby maſters may ſpeedily teach Foreigners to pronounce thoſe ſounds, and to make them familiar to the organs, ſo as to be uttered with eaſe.

3*dly*, The number of our double ſounds or dipthongs (an article in which the groſſeſt miſtakes have been committed) ſhall be aſcertained; the manner of their formation, and the particular vowels whereof each is compounded, ſhall be made evident.

4*thly*, Syllables ſhall be treated of, and particularly ſuch combinations of letters in ſyllables, as are peculiar to our tongue, and the manner of ſounding them, ſhall be ſhewn, and made eaſy. Under this head alſo ſhall be contained ſuch combinations of letters in writing, as produce different ſounds in utterance, in any of the above-mentioned languages, from what they do in ours.

5*thly*, Our manner of uniting ſyllables ſo as to form words ſhall be conſidered, and of diſtinguiſhing thoſe ſyllables from each other in pronunciation, ſhewing what letters are kept together, and what ſeparated in utterance; often erroneouſly marked in our grammars and ſpelling books, whoſe authors have divided their ſyllables, by rules that have no reference to pronunciation. Under this head will be laid open the nature and uſe of our accent, that grand maſter-key to the pronunciation of our tongue, whoſe

whoſe nature has hitherto been little underſtood, or groſly miſtaken. This is evidently ſhewn in our dictionaries, where the accent is invariably placed over the vowel of the accented ſyllable. Now nothing is of more moment in our tongue than to know when the accent is on the vowel, and when on the conſonant. By placing it conſtantly over the vowel, there is a rule of error eſtabliſhed, which muſt infallibly miſlead Provincials and Foreigners, in the pronunciation of all words, where the accent ought to be on the conſonant. Thus a native of Scotland, upon ſeeing the word *Phænómenon* thus accented in a Dictionary is naturally led to dwell upon the vowel, and pronounces the word thus *phænō-menon* giving the long ſound of *o* as in the word *gō*, and ending the ſyllable with the vowel; whereas were the accent over the *m*, as thus, *phænómenon*, it would be a mark to him that the *o* is to be ſounded ſhort, and the *m* taken in to the preceding vowel in forming the ſyllable, as *phænom, enon*; the *o* changing its ſound by means of the accent on the following *m*, in the ſame manner as if the *m* had been doubled, as in the word *common*. In like manner would he alſo ſound, *abóminable*, *abō-minable*, *hæbít*, *ha-bit*, and ſo forth.

Now as it is an invariable rule throughout our tongue, that whenever the accent is on the conſonant, the ſound not only of the preceding vowel is always ſhortened, but no other vowel in the word has ever its full long ſound; and whenever the accent is on the vowel, that vowel always has

has its full long ſound, and all the other vowels in the word are pronounced ſhort; there could not have been a more general guide to pronunciation, in one of the moſt material articles, than the marking this difference with accuracy. Whereas in the other way, it had been much better there had been no marks at all, as ſuch marks, in half the words of our tongue, neceſſarily lead into error.

The whole to conclude with a key to the pronunciation of the Engliſh tongue, whereby learners may know how to pronounce moſt words in our language at ſight, notwithſtanding the irregularity of our ſpelling. And with reſpect to ſuch anomalous words, as cannot be reduced to any rule, as the learner, where he has no light from rule to guide him, may always have recourſe to the dictionary, it will be in the power of every one to acquire a juſt pronunciation of all our words, with eaſe and certainty.

Such a grammar and dictionary will lay the foundation for regulating and refining our ſpeech, till it is brought to the degree of perfection whereof in its nature it is capable; and afterwards of fixing it in that ſtate to perpetuity, by a ſure and ſettled ſtandard. For tho' in a living tongue changes are not to be prevented, whilſt any plauſible colour can be given that ſuch changes are made for the better; yet, after the general rules of analogy ſhall have been laid open, all alterations hereafter will be made in conformity to thoſe rules, in order to render our language more regular

and complete. Nor will novelty or caprice, (the ſources of faſhion); or partial views of the conſtitution of our tongue, have it in their power to innovate as uſual; for the riſing generation, preinſtructed in the true genius of our tongue, and the rules by which it ought to be governed, will oppoſe any attempts in individuals, to introduce changes not made in conformity to thoſe rules. And ſuch alterations only, as ſhall by common ſuffrage be judged neceſſary to promote order and regularity in our tongue, will, by common ſuffrage, be admitted.

When a certain ſtandard of pronunciation is in every one's hands, men in general will find the benefit of it too great, readily to admit any alteration but ſuch as ſhall appear abſolutely neceſſary. Thus will our language be reſumed from that worſt of evils, a continual fluctuation, in which ſtate it has been from the time of the Saxons to this day.

Upon examination it will be found, that the pronunciation of our tongue has in general been formed upon the beſt principle in the world. Luckily for us the pedants bore no ſway in ſettling that part of our language; which province, by the power of faſhion, fell to the lot of people of education at Court: Who having no biaſs of particular or partial rules to miſguide them, were governed by one general rule, the very beſt by which the pronunciation of any tongue could be regulated, which was that of gradually

changing

changing the ſounds of words, from thoſe which were moſt difficult, to thoſe which were moſt eaſily uttered by the organs of ſpeech. And as it is an indiſputable truth, that the ſounds which are moſt eaſily uttered by the organs of ſpeech, are moſt pleaſing to the organs of hearing, it muſt be granted, that this is the very beſt rule by which the pronunciation of any language could be formed. Upon this principle, the pronunciation of Engliſh, as uſed by people of the beſt taſte at court, is ſo perfect, that there are few, of our words, capable of improvement in that reſpect. And this is a good reaſon for ſeizing this juncture to fix that pronunciation by a ſettled ſtandard, in order to make it permanent.

This ſtandard once fixed, the Engliſh tongue could never again be without a ſure one to refer to at all times. For though, in proceſs of time, ſome changes might take place, and be adopted into general uſe, yet thoſe changes would, from time to time, be marked by an Appendix to the Dictionary, if few; or, if they ſhould ſwell to any conſiderable number, by a new edition.

With regard to our ſpelling, as there are many alterations wanting, ſo it is probable that many will gradually take place. But thoſe changes will no longer be made by caprice, or from partial and miſtaken views of the uſe and end of written language. All mankind, convinced of the abſurdity of conſidering words upon paper,

in any other light, than as repreſentatives of words ſpoken; and reflecting on the great benefits that would ariſe, from making ſpelling a guide to pronunciation, will have that point only in view in all future innovations; and being no longer diſtracted by different principles, but having one obvious point only before their eyes, will, in proceſs of time, carry it to as great a perfection, as the nature of our defective alphabet will admit.

Upon the whole, if ſuch a Grammar and Dictionary were publiſhed, they muſt ſoon be adopted into uſe by all ſchools profeſſing to teach Engliſh. The conſequence of teaching children by one method, and one uniform ſyſtem of rules, would be an uniformity of pronunciation in all ſo inſtructed. Thus might the riſing generation, born and bred in different Countries, and Counties, no longer have a variety of dialects, but as ſubjects of one King, like ſons of one father, have one common tongue. All natives of theſe realms, would be reſtored to their birthright in commonage of language, which has been too long fenced in, and made the property of a few. And Foreigners would no longer be inhoſpitably ſhut out, from a communication with us in an article, ſo eſſentially neceſſary to the keeping up a ſocial intercourſe with us.

F I N I S.

BRITISH MUSEUM